

Alberto Cifuentes, Jr.
120 Promenade Dr.
Hamden, CT 06514

March 10, 2022

Dear Human Services Committee:

My name is Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., and I live in Hamden. I am a licensed social worker in the State of Connecticut and an organizer with the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). I am writing to urge you to support SB 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is a vital and necessary step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve as human beings. Our work does not end with expanding access up to age 18; instead, we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to ALL immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

As a professional community organizer and staunch ally of undocumented immigrants, I stand in solidarity with them on this bill that directly impacts their level of safety and well-being on multiple levels. Access to healthcare is not a privilege or “special right” reserved to an elite few. On the contrary, healthcare is a human right and should be provided to all people regardless of immigration status.

Providing healthcare access to immigrants regardless of age and status will save Connecticut precious money and resources. Healthcare equity is about prevention and sharing uncompensated care costs across both public and private insurance payers. Equalizing healthcare access is also about helping undocumented children and their families receive early treatment that could prevent them from developing long-term medical issues that will interfere with their ability to be healthy and productive residents of the state.

In 2018, undocumented immigrants residing in Connecticut paid \$335.4 million in federal taxes and \$197.4 million in state and local taxes; however, they unjustly do not have access to a system they fund through their taxes, including HUSKY programs (Medicaid and CHIP). A parallel can be made to undocumented students who pay a large portion of overall tuition costs into public higher educational institutions. Until 2018, undocumented students who paid tuition to public higher education colleges and universities were not able to access institutional aid. Both chambers of the Connecticut General Assembly recognized that this was, indeed, inequitable and voted to offer access to institutional aid to all students regardless of immigration status. Similarly, undocumented people are taxpayers who actively fund local and state healthcare programs; however, they do not have access to these programs because of their status. Like having access to institutional aid, all Connecticut residents deserve to have access to a healthcare system they fund through their taxes regardless of immigration status.

Lastly, our country is still plagued by anti-immigrant sentiment and extremist ideology that has often turned violent and deadly. While Connecticut is generally viewed as a safe, inclusive, and

affirming place for people of all diverse backgrounds, some undocumented students and their families residing in the state still experience bias and discrimination due to their perceived or actual immigration status. These experiences negatively impact their performances in school, access to employment opportunities, and overall self-esteem. These pervasive effects of prejudice and discrimination are *not* inevitable but preventable. Indeed, the state of Connecticut, in accordance with our values of respect, fairness, and justice, must respond by ensuring that immigrants regardless of status are provided access to affordable and equitable healthcare.

I hope you will support SB 284, and I ask the committee to swiftly support and pass this legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alberto Cifuentes, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alberto Cifuentes, Jr., LMSW